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SENSITIVE
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FOR WHA/CAR AND H
H PLEASE PASS TO CODEL CONYERS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OREP PGOV PREL ASEC HA
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR CODEL CONYERS'S VISIT TO HAITI,
APRIL 6-7

REF: STATE 31244

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Your visit comes as the Haitian
President and his new Prime Minister face difficult
challenges in the aftermath of the April 2008 food riots
and a devastating 2008 hurricane season. The storms and
resulting flooding displaced hundreds of thousands of
people and made Haiti's already dire economic situation
worse. More than 75 percent of Haitians live on less than
two U.S. dollars per day. Violent crime and drug
trafficking remain problems despite significant progress on
security issues since President Rene Preval's election in
¶2006.   In the midst of Haiti's rebuilding efforts, its
electoral authority is preparing long-overdue partial
Senate elections, scheduled for April 19. Visits in March
by UN SYG Ban Ki-moon, former President Clinton, and UN
Security Council representatives have focused U.S. and
international attention on Haiti just as it heads toward an
April 14 conference of donor countries in Washington,
D.C. Your visit will afford you the opportunity to survey
USG efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and the
rule of law in Haiti and encourage President Preval to make
progress on important reforms. End summary.

MODEST PROGRESS INTERRUPTED BY RIOTS, FLOODS

¶2. (SBU) Haiti is the hemisphere's poorest and most
politically troubled country. After the collapse of the
Duvalier dictatorship in 1986, Haiti experienced a
succession of military regimes and popularly-elected
governments, interspersed with coups d'etat, the departure
of an elected President in the midst of an armed rebellion,
and other destabilizing events. Even
democratically-elected leaders sometimes resorted to
political violence or failed to hold constitutionally
mandated elections. All these factors have exacerbated
political instability and economic stagnation.   Although
the two years following the departure of then-President
Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004 were marked by violence and
occasional disorder, the government that resulted from the
presidential and legislative elections of 2006 gave Haiti a
new chance to consolidate political stability and stimulate
investment and economic growth. However, rioting in April
2008, caused in part by rising food and energy prices,
brought political progress to a halt. While there was
genuine social grievance behind the April protests, much of
the associated violence was organized by political forces
seeking to oust then-PM Jacques-Edouard Alexis and
capitalize on the resulting instability. The Senate voted
to dismiss PM Alexis on April 12.

¶3. (SBU) In the five months following the dismissal of former
PM Alexis and his cabinet, the Haitian government was
paralyzed by political gridlock. Parliament rejected two
Prime Ministerial candidates on specious grounds. After

Preval nominated his third candidate, Michele Pierre-Louis,
Haiti was hit by a series of hurricanes and tropical storms
in August and September. The resulting flooding killed
almost 800 people, displaced hundreds of thousands more,
crippled the country's transportation infrastructure,
devastated livestock and crops, and caused nearly USD 1
billion in damage. In the face of strong public pressure to
confirm a government able to respond to the hurricane damage,
Parliament confirmed Pierre-Louis on September 5.

MIXED RESULTS ON COUNTERNARCOTICS, SECURITY EFFORTS
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¶4. (U) With considerable USG assistance, the Preval
administration continues the struggle to overcome pervasive
corruption, weak governance, and mismanagement, but this
effort was complicated by the food riots in April and the
impasse that resulted from the dismissal of former PM Alexis.
 Haiti's government, however, with assistance from
international donors -- principally the United States, the UN
peacekeeping force, and Canada -- continues to promote the
restoration of the rule of law. The Haitian National Police
(HNP) is midway through a reform plan to vet HNP personnel
and build up the police force to 14,000 officers by the end
of 2011, but weaknesses in law enforcement and the judiciary
remain.

¶5. (SBU) Narcotics trafficking is a growing problem in Haiti.
 Despite Haitian and international efforts, Haiti's 1,125
miles of shoreline, poorly controlled seaports, and numerous
clandestine airstrips make it an attractive transshipment hub
for drug traffickers to move cocaine and marijuana to the
United States. U.S. counternarcotics efforts focus on

strengthening the HNP (including the Haitian Coast Guard) and
providing technical assistance with anti-corruption and
strategic planning measures. The Drug Enforcement Agency
shares intelligence with Haitian authorities, conducts
bilateral investigations, and provides training. The
Embassy's Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) procures vehicles
and equipment for the HNP, funds police academy and
in-service training, and refurbishes and constructs police
stations. NAS also oversees U.S. Treasury training and
technical assistance to investigators, judges, and
prosecutors involved in money laundering and corruption
cases. Defense Department representatives are working to
increase the capacity of the Haitian Coast Guard, a sub-unit
of the HNP, to interdict narcotics shipments and illegal
migrants. Upcoming funding from the Merida Initiative will
help Haitian authorities establish a base in Port-de-Paix, on
Haiti's northern coast.

¶6. (U) The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is
the product of unprecedented hemispheric security cooperation
among regional partners of the United States. Brazil,
Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru contribute over
half of MINUSTAH's 7,000 troops. This UN mission, which we
strongly support, makes a crucial contribution to Haiti's
security and stability. Under the leadership of SRSG Hedi
Annabi and Force Commander Major General Floriano Peixoto
Veira Neto (Brazil), over 7,000 MINUSTAH troops and 2,000
police remain critical to maintaining the minimal security
Haiti needs, filling the gap left by inadequate force levels
and capabilities of the HNP. In MINUSTAH's UN police
operations pillar, Formed Police Units (gendarmerie-type
police units from individual contributor countries) aid the
HNP with riot control operations, as they did during the
April 2008 disturbances. UN Police (UNPOL) advisors from
various countries, including the United States, provide
support to HNP operations.

ECONOMY STAGNANT

¶7. (SBU) The two decades of political instability following
the collapse of the Duvalier dictatorship caused economic
regression and stagnation to the point that Haitian GDP per
capita, today around USD 700 per year, is barely higher

than it was in the late 1950s. More than 80 percent of the
population lives below the poverty level, and at least 60
percent of the population is unemployed or underemployed.
The Preval government has focused primarily on security but
has done little to facilitate foreign and domestic
investment and create jobs. Current perceptions of
security levels, inadequate infrastructure, and an
inhospitable business climate deter investment in Haiti
today.   The August storms reduced the 2008 growth rate to
1.3 percent, less than the 2.5 percent population growth
rate. We have encouraged President Preval and the
Government to help Haitian and foreign investors take
maximum advantage of the second Haiti Opportunity Through
Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE II), a trade preference
bill that allows many types of textiles manufactured in
Haiti duty-free access to U.S. markets. That program thus
far has created about 11,000 jobs.

LONG-DELAYED ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL

¶8. (SBU) Amidst the country's rebuilding efforts, Haitian
authorities are preparing to hold elections for the 12
vacant seats in the 30-member Senate, a void that has made
it difficult for that body to muster a quorum. Haiti's
electoral authority, the Provisional Electoral Council
(CEP), is organizing the April 19 balloting. The USG has
already made USD 4 million available to help fund the
elections, and international donors will contribute
approximately USD 11 million of the budgeted USD 16 million
in election-related expenses. The terms of another third
of the Senate, along with the entire Chamber of Deputies,
will expire in January 2010, necessitating yet another
round of elections in November of this year.

¶9. (SBU) The April elections have generated considerable
controversy, primarily because the CEP disallowed the
candidacies of all applicants from Fanmi Lavalas, the
fractured political party of former President Aristide.
CEP officials announced February 5 that Lavalas candidates
had all failed to provide an explicit authorization by
Aristide to represent the party in the coming elections.
Aristide, currently in exile in South Africa, declined to
provide explicit authorization for any candidate, or to
formally delegate that authority to any of the Lavalas

leaders present in Haiti. The fact that two factions of
Fanmi Lavalas presented competing lists of candidates
further undermined the party's case. The CEP did not
relent to calls from the major international donors to make
the elections more inclusive. Protests organized by
Lavalas activists have so far failed to inspire significant
grassroots support.

DONOR CONFERENCE SET FOR APRIL

¶10. (SBU) A donor conference is scheduled for April 14 in
Washington to help Haiti address the significant damage
wrought by the 2008 riots and hurricane season, and to shore
up a difficult budget year for the Haitian Government. Haiti
is likely to use the conference to press for direct budget
support, although international donors generally prefer to
work through international NGOs, public international
organizations, or UN agencies in view of the limited
technical capacity of GOH institutions.

THE ASSISTANCE PICTURE: RULE OF LAW/GOVERNANCE
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¶11. (U) Our assistance efforts in Haiti -- financed by USAID,
CDC, the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics
and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL/NAS), and the U.S. Coast
Guard -- seek to implement reforms, build public
institutions, improve law enforcement and corrections
capability, and help deliver basic services. Rule of Law
programs target Haiti's justice system by helping increase
judicial authorities' administrative, management and

technical capacity. Good Governance programs provide
technical assistance and training to Haiti's Parliament in
the areas of legislative drafting, legal and judicial reform,
and rules of procedure. Programs aimed at conflict
mitigation address poverty and gang-related violence through
creation of short- and long-term employment and transfer of
job skills trough labor-intensive reconstruction of social
and productive infrastructure. Another program targets the
Provisional Electoral Council to help it solidify its
organization and modernize the voter registration process.
Civil society programs assist a variety of local media,
regional journalist associations, and public service
associations, including those that monitor corruption.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

¶12. (U) The steep rise in food prices in 2008 followed by the
four hurricanes sharply exacerbated Haiti's chronic food
insecurity, to which approximately 3 million Haitians are now
exposed. USAID contributed USD 45 million in emergency food
aid and another USD 14 million for post-hurricane recovery.
USAID is continuing its programs to build disaster early
warning, response and mitigation capacity. The Ambassador
officiated in November at the ground-breaking ceremony for an
Emergency Operations Center for Haiti's disaster response
agencies. Following the hurricanes, Congress appropriated an
additional USD 96 million over three years for the
restoration of public services, repairs to public use
infrastructure, provision of income-generating activities,
asset restoration, and support to affected families.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION/ECONOMIC GROWTH

¶13. (U) Basic health programs help increase access to
essential health services in 72 public sector clinics and 80
NGO clinics. Nearly 50 percent of Haiti's population
receives at least some health services financed by the USG.
USAID-financed education programs include a new basic
education project to strengthen the Ministry of Education's
management and supervisory system, help it extend supervision
over the vast private-sector education system, and provide
scholarships. Social assistance programs support Haiti's
most vulnerable citizens. Economic growth programs target
trade and investment, financial sector programs for small and
medium enterprises, and programs for agricultural
productivity and marketing. Reducing environmental
degradation is the goal of USD 25 million in programs that
focus on restoring watersheds to thwart periodic flooding.

HIV/AIDS RELIEF

¶14. (U) Haiti has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection in
the Western Hemisphere. The President's Emergency Plan for
AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) will provide just short of USD 100

million in FY 2009 to prevent infections and place
HIV-positive persons into treatment. Implemented by USAID
and CDC, PEPFAR programs target HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis,
but also benefit large parts of Haiti's health care system.
The PEPFAR program in Haiti is the largest in the hemisphere.

POLICE REFORM/CORRECTIONS

¶15. (SBU) The U.S. is the lead donor in implementing the
MINUSTAH/Haitian National Police (HNP) reform plan, which
foresees building up the HNP from its current strength of
9,600 to 14,000 officers by the end of 2011. In concert with
MINUSTAH's mandate to enhance Haiti's border security, the
U.S. Coast Guard provides training for the Haitian Coast
Guard, financed by INL/NAS. Facility renovations, additional
boats, and a new operating base on the north coast will be
funded by INL/NAS in 2009. The U.S. made a commitment in
2007 to assist in improving the conditions and respect for
human rights in Haiti's prison system, and remains the lead

donor to Haiti in this sector.
SANDERSON